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Health Reform Law To Help 119,000 North Carolina Seniors Struggling to Pay for Prescription Drugs

[Washington, D.C.] – **Rep. Brad Miller (NC-13)** announced that Medicare begins mailing out \$250 'donut hole' checks today to tens of thousands of North Carolina seniors who fall in the donut hole coverage gap. Under the recently enacted Health Reform Law, seniors will receive this one-time tax-free \$250 rebate check. These checks will continue to be mailed monthly over the next several months as seniors enter the coverage gap.

"This check will reduce the cost of prescription drugs for many of our seniors," said **Rep. Miller**. "This is the first benefit of the health care reform bill for our seniors and it won't be the last."

Beginning in January 2011, seniors in the donut hole will receive a 50% discount on brand name drugs. By 2020, the donut hole will be completely closed.

Congressional Republicans created the donut hole – leaving thousands of seniors to choose between buying the prescriptions they need and putting food on the table. The 'donut hole' coverage gap is the period in the prescription drug benefit (once their prescription drug costs exceed \$2,830) in which the beneficiary pays 100 percent of the cost of their drugs until they hit the catastrophic coverage threshold.

Last year, roughly 119, 000 North Carolinians fell into the prescription drug donut hole and received no extra help to defray the cost of their prescription drugs. Nationwide, almost four million seniors have fallen into the donut hole.

Medicare recipients don't have to do anything to get the \$250 check – once their drug costs for the year hit \$2,830 the one-time check will be issued automatically.

But, **Rep. Miller** warned seniors to be on the lookout for fraud.

Making prescription drugs more affordable for seniors is only one of the many benefits for seniors included in the recently enacted health reform law. Other benefits for seniors include:

Provides free preventive care services under Medicare, beginning in 2011. Strengthens Medicare by extending its solvency by an additional 12 years, from 2017 to 2029. Improves seniors' access to doctors. Continues to reduce waste, fraud and abuse. Improves care by helping doctors communicate and coordinate. Expands home and community-based services to keep seniors in their home, instead of in nursing homes.

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